

Senate Bill No. 1475

Passed the Senate August 21, 2008

Secretary of the Senate

Passed the Assembly August 14, 2008

Chief Clerk of the Assembly

This bill was received by the Governor this _____ day
of _____, 2008, at _____ o'clock ____M.

Private Secretary of the Governor

CHAPTER _____

An act to add and repeal Article 8 (commencing with Section 4698) of Chapter 6 of Division 4.5 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, relating to autism.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 1475, Torlakson. Autism pilot project.

Under existing law, the State Department of Developmental Services, the State Department of Education, the State Department of Health Care Services, the State Department of Mental Health, and the State Department of Social Services collaborate to provide early intervention for children with disabilities or at risk of having disabilities. Under existing law, the State Department of Developmental Services contracts with private nonprofit regional centers to provide or purchase services and supports for persons with developmental disabilities, including Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). The State Department of Education and school districts also provide services in the schools for children with ASD.

This bill would require the State Department of Developmental Services to establish a 2-year pilot project to, among other things, provide methods, instruments, and systems of care between regional centers and school districts for the early identification and assessment of children with ASD from birth to 5 years of age. This bill would also require the department, no later than June 1, 2012, to submit a report to the Legislature and the Governor on the pilot project containing specified information. This bill would require the department to apply to the California Children and Families Commission for funding for the pilot program and would condition the reestablishment of the pilot program upon the department obtaining those funds from the commission or other sources. This bill would make its provisions inoperative on July 1, 2012, and repeal them on January 1, 2013.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(a) The number of children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) has grown dramatically in recent years and is a serious public health crisis that must be addressed.

(b) Currently, children with ASD receive services from regional centers through the Early Start Program, but must transition to services provided by school districts when they are between three to five years of age.

(c) This transition currently presents a severe crisis to many families because it disrupts the continuity of programs and interventions that have already been implemented and are proving efficient in overcoming ASD and improving developmental outcomes.

(d) The transition is often inefficient and not cost effective because the regional centers and the school districts are not coordinated with regard to programs, services, and interventions.

(e) In many cases this transition is also disruptive because the programs, professionals, and providers who contract to provide services to regional centers and school districts are different.

(f) The transition is not cost effective because the school districts, despite lacking the resources and administrative supports, must duplicate complex assessments that have already been performed by the regional centers.

(g) Crucial services and interventions for children with ASD are often delayed while regional centers and school districts quarrel over the financial responsibilities of implementing the services.

(h) The California Legislative Blue Ribbon Commission on Autism noted that there are models of voluntary collaboration between regional centers and school districts that provide comprehensive, integrated, and seamless services to children with ASD and that these models have increased family and consumer satisfaction and have produced more effective outcomes than the traditional model.

SEC. 2. Article 8 (commencing with Section 4698) is added to Chapter 6 of Division 4.5 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, to read:

Article 8. Early Autism Intervention and Transition Pilot
Program

4698. (a) As used in this article “ASD” means Autism Spectrum Disorders.

(b) It is the intent of the Legislature to implement a two-year pilot project in key geographic areas around the state that will identify solutions to improve collaboration between regional centers and school districts for children with ASD who are deemed eligible for services and supports by regional centers and enhances the quality of early intervention and education programs for children from birth to 5 years of age.

(c) The intent of the pilot program is to identify and implement existing models of excellence and best practices and to identify and reduce barriers to effective collaboration in order to establish a seamless, comprehensive, and integrated service delivery model between regional centers and school districts for children with ASD and their families, particularly in culturally, linguistically, and geographically diverse or underserved populations.

4698.1. (a) The department, in partnership with one or more regional centers, shall establish and administer a pilot project which shall be called The Centers of Excellence for Early Autism Intervention and Transitional Services (hereafter pilot project).

(b) The intent of the pilot project is to provide integrated and seamless services and systems of care for children with ASD who are deemed eligible for services and supports by regional centers.

(c) At least three pilot locations shall be established for a period of two years. Each location shall require a collaborative, integrated proposal between at least one regional center and at least one school district or local educational agency.

(d) Pilot project proposals may include the participation of other agencies, organizations, foundations, stakeholder groups, or other providers as long as the participation is approved by the department.

(e) The pilot project shall do all of the following:

(1) Establish innovative, collaborative, integrated, and seamless methods, instruments, and systems of care between regional centers and school districts for the early identification and assessment of children with ASD from birth to five years of age.

(2) Establish innovative fiscal models using pooled funding and resources that have demonstrated cost-effective benefits and outcomes.

(3) Determine how the use of telehealth, telemedicine, and other innovative web-based technology strategies may improve the professional development, outreach, and training of families, consumers, professionals, and staff who are affiliated with, or served by, regional centers, school districts, or local educational agencies.

4698.2. No later than June 1, 2012, the department shall provide the Legislature and the Governor with a report on the pilot program. The report shall make legislative, regulatory, and fiscal recommendations that would further the goal of providing a seamless, integrated, and coordinated system of care for the early identification and treatment of ASD between the regional centers and school districts and local educational agencies.

4698.3. The Legislature recognizes that the regional center system serves individuals who are deemed eligible in accordance with subdivisions (a) of Section 95014 of the Government Code and subdivisions (a) and (l) of Section 4512. Nothing in this article is intended to change the existing eligibility criteria for receiving regional center services.

4698.4. No state general funds shall be used to fund the pilot program in any state fiscal year. The department shall apply to the California Children and Families Commission for funding to cover the costs of the pilot program, including any and all costs that are incurred by the department. The pilot program shall be established only after the department applies to and obtains funds from the California Children and Families Commission or other sources.

4698.5. This article shall become inoperative on July 1, 2012, and, as of January 1, 2013, is repealed unless a later enacted statute, that is enacted before January 1, 2013, deletes or extends the dates on which it becomes inoperative and is repealed.

Approved _____, 2008

Governor